

EXHIBIT 4

Education Matters



*A newsletter from the
East Ramapo Central School District
for non-public school parents*

*105 South Madison Avenue, Spring Valley, NY 10977
Dr. Joel Klein, Superintendent of Schools Susie Grama, Editor*

FEBRUARY 2013

VOLUME XIII

From the Superintendent



Dr. Joel Klein

Once again, budget time has arrived. The budget is an important issue both educationally and financially. The East Ramapo Central School District Board of Education works hard to provide the best education and services to its public and non-public school students in a fiscally responsible manner. Therefore, we hold open meetings in which the public can give its input and gain first-hand information concerning the topics related to our educational progress and services. The budget will be discussed at upcoming Board meetings to be held on April 9th and April 23rd. They will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the Boardroom of the East Ramapo Central School District Administration Building, located at 105 South Madison Avenue in Spring Valley.

The 2013-14 budget will again be a very difficult one. With significant increases in costs and limited increases in revenues, it will be almost impossible to balance the budget without reducing programs and services. These decisions will be very hard to make, and will impact all members of the community.

On April 23rd, the Board is expected adopt the 2013-14 budget, and the public hearing is expected to be on May 7th, 2013.

The annual election and budget vote will be on Tuesday, May 21st.

Under New York State legislation, there is a tax levy cap which prevents the tax levy from being raised more than two percent, except for certain items, such as tax certioraris, large pension increases, legal suits, etc.

We urge the parents to join the meetings and offer their opinions and suggestions.

We look forward to community participation and support in planning for the next school year.

ADMINISTRATORS' MEETING

At the January 29th meeting for non-public school (NPS) administrators, Elie Wizman, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Funded Programs (OFP) and Special Student Services, reported the results of the Title I, II, and III audits. They showed that East Ramapo was in compliance with all the requirements, and the District received a good review.

He noted that in order to verify that students reside in East Ramapo, all students must register with the District, and obtain an ID from the Transportation Office.

Dr. Klein reviewed the budget crisis and its impact on services to both the public and non-public schools. Because the state does not consider the non-public school students in its funding formula, East Ramapo is severely underfunded with State Aid. Without reasonable aid from the state, many services to the public and non-public schools will be cut.

Mr. Wizman announced that Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) funding remains. There are 1,662 slots available. The registration deadline is May 15, 2013.

Merritte Mellion, OPF, reviewed the upcoming professional development workshops. She encouraged administrators to attend the Professional Development Committee meetings, as workshops are often based on recommendations of the committee.

The State Education Department has suggested bringing special education students back to the district in order to save money. The District is forming a Special Education Committee of community stakeholders to help shape the expansion of in-house services. Mr. Wizman will be inviting representatives from the State Education Department and the Office of Civil Rights to attend these meetings. He urges parents of students in special education and people who understand the cultural differences and sensitivities of the District's population to attend, as well. Such a committee will help East Ramapo move forward.

WILSON READING SYSTEM Introductory Workshop

"To provide quality professional development and on-going support so that educators have the skills and tools to help their students become fluent and independent readers." This is the mission statement of the Wilson Reading System, a program that was presented to teachers, mentor-tutors, and administrators of the District's non-public schools. The three-day workshop,



Lorraine Poccia

which took place from February 4-6, was given by Lorraine Poccia, a Wilson Reading System (WRS) trainer. She was a teacher for many years and has much experience in using this program. She found it very successful, and is enthusiastic about the program and about training teachers in its use.

Based on Orton-Gillingham principles, it is a highly structured, multi-sensory program, geared for struggling readers. WRS is usually implemented with children in 2nd grade or above - up to 12th grade - who score below the 30th percentile on standardized reading tests. (Wilson has a basic reading program for the general classroom, as well.) WRS is helpful for people who have not internalized the English language sound/symbol system and have difficulty associating letters with sounds. WRS is beneficial for various other reading difficulties that students may have, such as language-based learning disability; slow, labored reading with lack of fluency; ability to read sight words, but difficulty with reading new ones; and gaps in decoding and/or spelling. It is also useful for English Language Learners who may speak and understand English, but are unable to read and write it efficiently.

Mrs. Poccia discussed dyslexia, a language difficulty that pertains to words. Its origin is neurological. Someone with dyslexia has problems with word recognition and spelling (decoding and encoding words), which is a function of the left brain area. Children with dyslexia typically make errors of various types, not just reversals, as is commonly thought. Examples of reversals are reading and writing "b" for "d," and "p" for "q."

Other common errors are: substitutions - "j" for "g"; omissions - leaving a letter out - "cold" for "could"; adding a letter - "stair" for "star"; transposition - changing the order of letters - "starp" for "strap"; and inversions - "b" for "p."

Many of these symptoms are common to children in the early grades, but generally most of these errors should not appear once the child is in 3rd grade. Even in 1st grade, though, the frequency of symptoms could be a matter of degree. Dyslexics have trouble with phonemic awareness that is manifested in blending sounds to read words and in segmenting sounds to spell words. If the symptoms seem severe, remediation should be investigated and implemented as early as kindergarten or grade 1. WRS is usually started in 3rd grade if symptoms persist.

People with dyslexia are not mentally slow; their learning progress is impeded by their neurological make-up. Many dyslexic people are very talented in areas other than reading and spelling, usually in areas of the right brain functions. Common positive characteristics of people with dyslexia are musical and artistic abilities, good visual-spatial orientation, mechanical ability, athletics, and creative problem solving.

The brain can be re-trained with intensive, powerful, and consistent instruction. The Wilson Reading System addresses the learning problems with its explicit, systematic, multi-sensory design.

The system is comprised of a 12-step program that can take from three to six years to complete. It concentrates on teaching decoding and encoding to the point of automaticity, with the ultimate goal of fluency and reading comprehension.

Mrs. Poccia cited studies stating that in order for someone to integrate information, he must be exposed to it anywhere from six to forty times. WRS's system has constant review and repetition of material.



The Wilson technique uses a series of sound cards for teaching letter and sound recognition. The cards consist of all the vowels and consonants, plus a set of digraphs (two letters together that make up one sound: wh, sh, ch, th, ck). Each type of sound is printed on a different color card. The teacher does direct instruction of each sound, practicing in different ways. Writing in the air and forming letters with a finger on the desk are ways to use larger muscles, which activate a different area of the brain than do the reading and small motor movements.

- /s/ index finger to thumb
- /ā/ middle finger to thumb
- /d/ ring finger to thumb



An activity employed to help children segment and blend sounds is tapping. The children tap a finger on the thumb of the

same hand for each sound. This is an illustration of how the word "sad" is tapped.

The Wilson system encourages a great deal of interaction between student and teacher, with the teacher modeling how to say sounds or words and students repeating; then there is a short, immediate review after the practice. Questioning is woven throughout the lesson. Students are often used as the drill monitors for a

continued on page 3

Instructional Strategies to Help English Language Learners

It's been too long since teachers and mentor-tutors in the District's non-public school sector had the opportunity to hear Maxine LaRaus, but on February 12th and 13th,



Maxine LaRaus

they were privileged to hear this supreme educator give workshops on Instructional Strategies to Help English Language Learners. The first presentation was for instructors of kindergarten - grade 4; the second, for grades 5 - 12. The combination of Mrs. LaRaus'

dynamic personality, great knowledge, and vast experience in her field resulted in a rich learning experience for the attendees.

Mrs. LaRaus emphasized that all teachers should be sensitive to the needs of their students, and the teachers of English Language Learners (ELL) have to deal with the challenge of the children not understanding the language that is spoken around them. Instruction has to be very intentional and use as many visual clues as possible. The teacher of ELL's has "to think visual."

She stressed that the use of pictures and labels on objects in the classroom is very important, as is the teacher's acting out what she is trying to convey. The ELL teacher must use total physical response (TPR).

Teaching should be done in "chunks," she told the group. That means short periods of time are given for each segment of a lesson. For instance, in a reading lesson, "You're going to read a little bit, and see if it's understood; read a little bit, see if it's understood. You're going to 'chunk' the teaching, and 'chunk' the reading," she explained. This gives the child the time to process small bits of information at a time. One of the ways that the teacher can check to see if the children understand is to have them draw the answers if they can't speak enough English. A teacher can ask "yes" or "no" questions, which would not require much vocabulary from the student.

Another way she suggested is to have the children hold up



cards with the answers on them. This is also a way to engage the whole class at one time since all the children can be answering that way at the same time.

Someone learning a foreign language has two types of language to learn. One is called BICS - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; the other is CALP - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. *continued on page 4*

Wilson Reading System *continued from page 2*

review lesson. This gives the teacher the opportunity to see how well the child who is the monitor knows his/her work, as well as assessing the children in the group who answer.

One of the parts of the lesson is "charting," a diagnostic tool whereby the student reads a word list while the teacher records errors on a chart. This is to check fluency and accuracy, and for the teacher to be able to target trouble spots. S/he checks the chart regularly to monitor progress.

The teacher can go on to the next level when the students are able to correctly read 15 out of 15 words and 13 out of 15 nonsense words.

For practicing text reading, first the children read controlled passages on each level. This means that the vocabulary consists of particular types of words that the children have been taught to read, *i.e.*, all the vocabulary words have short vowels, and the sight words are known by the students. Later, the students work with non-controlled decodable text.

The teacher should plan lessons around the needs of each child. S/he must note the mistakes and teach those areas until the child is proficient in them.

The participants received a guidebook, which contained the information that Mrs. Poccia covered, plus a lesson plan outline and lesson plan forms. Each lesson is divided into ten parts, each part taking from two to twenty minutes. The suggested length of a session is 45-90 minutes,

every day, if possible. Less time is needed for a session with an individual child than for a group of students. The Wilson Reading System provides lesson plans for teaching every aspect of reading, including comprehension.

The attendees were enthusiastic about the workshop and thoroughly appreciated Mrs. Poccia's presentation and willingness to "be there for them." Their sentiment was expressed by one of the educators, who said, "We were waiting for this."



The participants presented a "sweet" token of appreciation to Mrs. Poccia, as well as to Meritte Mellion, Office of Funded Programs, who worked hard to make the workshop happen.

JOB POSTINGS*East Ramapo Central School District***Certificated Positions - Available Immediately**

ESL

LOTE Spanish Teacher

Network Team Leader

Science Teacher

Technology

To apply for certificated positions, please submit a letter of interest and a resumé (hard copies only) to Dr. Arthur Fisher, Personnel Office, Administration Building
105 South Madison Avenue, Spring Valley, NY 10977

For certificated positions, please also apply on the BOCES On-Line Application System, www.olasjobs.org.

Non-Certificated Positions - Available Immediately

Occupational Therapy Substitute

State Education Department Requirements

A civil service test is required to hold a non-certificated position.

To apply for non-certificated positions, please submit a letter of interest and resume to

Dianne Psaros, Personnel Office, Administration Building,
105 South Madison Avenue, Spring Valley, NY 10977

Coaching Position - Available Immediately

Head Varsity Football

To apply for coaching position, please contact William Pilla, Athletic Coordinator/Interim Instructional Supervisor of Physical Education/Health
Spring Valley High School, 361 Rte. 59, Spring Valley, NY 10977

Teaching ELL's continued from page 3

BICS is the language used in socialization and personal interaction. It has many clues and is relatively easy to learn. It takes one to three years to acquire BICS. CALP is academic language needed to accomplish academic tasks. There are fewer context clues and the student must draw the meaning from the language itself. For example, the concepts and language of math are mostly specific to that subject. CALP usually takes five to ten years to learn, depending on the age of the student and the native language proficiency.

Mrs. LaRaus pointed out that the teacher of ELL's has to know his/her students from many aspects. S/he has to be aware of the culture from which the child comes in order to understand any behaviors that might be different from that of the rest of the students. The teacher should be aware of how the child performed academically in the school of his/her native country. This can be ascertained by previous school records or work done by the child in his/her native tongue. The teacher must also be knowledgeable of differences in the sounds contained in the child's native language. Some languages have sounds that English doesn't have and English has some sounds that the native language might not have. An important understanding is that lack of ability to speak English does not signify a lack of intelligence.

Mrs. LaRaus discussed the issue of not watering down lessons because of a false perception that the children are not capable just because they don't speak English. Teachers should give material that is challenging and interesting to the students, no matter what their level, but with appropriate support.

"English language learners can think - in their own language," she said. Children who are strong learners in their native language can transfer that ability to English. When ELL's in an older grade create written work that has many

errors, the teacher should choose one teaching point to work on, and not mark up the paper with corrections. This will not discourage the child, and will allow him/her to integrate the corrections without being overwhelmed.

There are certain teaching practices about which the ELL teacher should be very diligent:

- Speak slowly and clearly, making sure that each word is heard individually, without sounding like a robot.
- Face the students when speaking to them.
- As much as possible, write on the board what is being said, and have words displayed in the room.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. That does not mean saying the same thing over and over; repetition can be done in a variety of ways. Mrs. LaRaus stated, "Repetition is a gift. It is not boring."

She noted that teachers have to build language with their ELL students. There are concept words that children need for understanding lessons and directions. Included on the list are words such as: top, bottom, between, next, first, alike, different, every, matches, skip a box, separated, and many others. A large number of these words are concrete and easy to demonstrate. It is helpful to know if the student has these concepts in his/her own language. Mrs. LaRaus said that if a teacher speaks the native language of the students, it can be supportive to use the first language to help a child understand difficult points. However, it is important that this be done judiciously. It also gives the student a comfortable, secure feeling to know that there is someone who can understand him/her.

It was interesting to note that Mrs. LaRaus included in her own presentation the teaching strategies that she espouses - listening, caring, gentleness, purpose - with the desired outcome of people learning - and enjoying it.